



Photo: Yukon Archives, Eva Steinhil collection, 2002/53, #1

A woman tentatively identified as Lillian Mabel Taylor.

LILLIAN MABEL TAYLOR

Miner and entrepreneur

By Lillian Nakamura Maguire, Hidden History Society Yukon

A diary, personal papers, and a studio portrait of a young Black woman found at Livingstone Creek, northeast of Whitehorse, tell us the little we know about Lillian Mabel Taylor. The portrait is believed to be of Taylor and taken in Portland, Or., in about 1898, shortly before she came to the Yukon.

The Hidden Histories Society Yukon (HHSY) has pieced together some of Taylor's history using documents at the Yukon Archives and the work of researchers Peggy D'Orsay and Leslie Hamson, the latter the author of *Livingstone Creek, Yukon: A Compendium History*.

Taylor was attracted to the North by the promise of new opportunities with fewer restrictions because of race, gender, and socio-economic status. She owned mining claims in Skagway, Alaska, in 1898, during the Klondike Gold Rush. Then, in the Yukon's Kluane Region, she purchased a claim on Marshall Creek, in 1903, and was a partner in an exploration project on Sheep Creek.

The 1911 Canadian census lists her as Jamaica born, 31 years old, and living at Livingstone Creek, northeast of Whitehorse. She moved there in 1902 to work her claim. She also cooked and did laundry for miners.

In her book, Hamson notes that Taylor may have

lived in one section of a roadhouse at Livingstone Creek, next to where she cooked: "Taylor had a life of hard work, health problems, and ambivalent relationships with the men she served. She enjoyed almost nightly card games (called 'solo') with them but she also notes often feeling insulted and hurt by their treatment of her."

Taylor eventually moved to Whitehorse, although it's unknown when or why. An article in *The Weekly Star* in November 1912 indicated she had health issues. Taylor was quoted as chastising a thief who stole vegetables from her garden while she was in hospital for rheumatism.

Then, in February 1913, *The Weekly Star* reported Taylor left for Portland to live with her mother and sister. Two months later, the paper printed a letter of thanks from Taylor's sister, Orah R. Hilbert, and her mother. The hospital board and Yukon government had paid the fare of Kate Ryan, who accompanied Taylor on the voyage south. The letter from Taylor's family stated that she was improving rapidly after having surgery.

The rest of Taylor's story is unknown. If you have further information on her life, please contact the Hidden Histories Society Yukon at info@hhsy.org. **Y**

HHSY researches the stories of Black and Asian people who have contributed to the development of the territory. It's launching exhibits on Black and Asian Yukoners in spring 2022.